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CIA in Uproar

Senator Reverses On Viet Nam Atrocities

BY HERALD TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — The CIA and State Department were thrown into an uproar Wednesday when a news dispatch reported Sen Stephen M. Young as saying he had been told the Central Intelligence Agency had committed atrocities in Viet Nam to discredit the Viet Cong.

But the 76-year-old Ohio Democrat told the Herald Tribune News Service "I did not say that."

HIS EARLIER purported statement elicited an immediate denial from the usually silent CIA—"absolutely false," a spokesman protested—and a deep anguish among State Department officials who feared his reported remarks would have disastrous repercussions abroad.

Those reactions stemmed from a news agency dispatch quoting Sen Young as saying that a CIA agent in Viet Nam told him the CIA committed atrocities there to underscore the Viet Cong guerrillas' reputation for cruelty.

ASKED ABOUT the report, Sen Young modified it considerably.

He told the Herald Tribune News Service that "a man who claimed to be working for the CIA" in Viet Nam alleged the intelligence agency had hired some South Vietnamese to masquerade as Viet Cong, adding:

"It was alleged to me that several of these executed two village leaders and raped some women."

In a meandering elaboration of the remarks attributed earlier to him, the senator indicated at one point he believed a group of the purported masqueraders had committed the alleged atrocities.

BUT HE THEN added "I still don't know, I don't believe such an incident occurred, but I could see how it could have occurred."

The senator said he exclaimed "I can't believe that" when the purported CIA agent told him of the "alleged" atrocities.

And he said on returning to Washington from South Viet Nam he had asked CIA about the purported incident and had been told the intelligence agency "would not sanction that."

"CIA has employed some South Vietnamese and they have been instructed to claim they are Viet Cong and to work accordingly," the senator said, "but of course no one could tell me any American instructed anyone to perpetrate outrages."

IT IS UNKNOWN if the senator's elaboration will ever catch up with the remarks credited earlier to him.

They caused wide consternation here. A CIA spokesman said "as far as our agents having done such things (committed atrocities), the statement is absolutely false."

Several State Department officials bewailed the senator's reported remarks as "irresponsible," and predicted gloomily they would be brandished by Communists around the world as evidence the United States is engaging in atrocities in Viet Nam.